Celebrating Rural Scholars 2015

GRACE AVERITT • RYAN BEAVER • CHELSEA BERGES • AARON EREZ • WILLIAM GRIFFIN • SHAMYAL KHAN
CELIA MARTINEZ • TALON MINER • CATHERINE PFEIFFER • KRISSA PYRCH • ARIEL RIEZENMAN
HOLLIE ROSE • KIMBERLY WILSON
A WORD
from the Assistant Dean of Rural Medical Education

On May 16, 2015, thirteen Rural Scholars will receive the DO degree from the University of North Texas Health Science Center’s Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine. This is the 6th cohort of our Rural Scholars program and they have distinguished themselves in many ways. Taking on extra course work, a research project, and completing rotations from Texas to Alaska have given these graduates experiences that will prepare them well for rural practice. Their stories are chronicled in this senior edition of Trail Rider Notes. For the first time in the six year history of the rural scholars program, all graduates will enter primary care residencies in family medicine, pediatrics, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, or medicine and pediatrics.

This class was the first to participate in the “college” system developed within TCOM. Their group, Zachary College, is strong because of their initial leadership. Their accomplishments both in and out of the classroom have been outstanding. It is indeed with sadness that I see them leave our campus, but with great joy and happiness that I will welcome them as colleagues. Hopefully, we will see them help replenish the rural Texas physician workforce after completing residency.

Congratulations to the 2015 TCOM Rural Scholars!

John R. Bowling, DO, FACOFP, dist.
Professor and Assistant Dean, Rural Medical Education
UNTHSC – TCOM

Our Director Receives Top Honor at ACOFP Conference

“The ACOFP Osteopathic Educator of the Year Award honors a member who encourages osteopathic principles when teaching, and who has an extraordinary effect on students, residents, and peers. That certainly defines Dr. John Bowling.

Dr. Bowling is a 1969 graduate of the A.T. Still University Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine. Following internship he practiced Family Medicine and Obstetrics for 18 years in Lancaster, Ohio, first mentoring students in his office in 1975, and then starting a Family Medicine residency program in Columbus in 1979.

Over Dr. Bowling’s 40 years as an osteopathic educator, 27 of those years have been full time in Texas, where he now serves as Professor of Family Medicine and Medical Education at the Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine and as its Associate Dean for Rural Medical Education.

John’s passion for rural medical education is paramount in his service to our profession. He created rural training guidelines that are affixed to our specialty’s basic standards. In fact, his thumbprint is on each page of our overall standards, having significantly revised them through his participation on ACOFP’s Committee on Education and Evaluation on which he served from 1993 to 2007.

And he represents our specialty at the national level, having recently been elected to the Board of the Rural Medical Educators Group – a subcommittee of the National Rural Health Association where he is an advocate for rural medical education.

He now serves as a Director on the American Osteopathic Board of Family Physicians, and as that board’s liaison to the AOA Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists.

Dr. John Bowling, because of the lasting impact you have had on hundreds of osteopathic family physicians over four decades, and because you are an architect of residency training in osteopathic family medicine, the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians honors you as its 2015 Osteopathic Educator of the Year!”

The award was presented by Kevin V. de Regnier, DO, ACOFP President.
The dictionary offers this definition of the word grace, "the quality or state of being considerate or thoughtful." Our Grace Strickland Averitt is certainly that kind of person and has become that kind of physician. Grace traveled to Liberty, Texas to complete her Family Medicine clinical rotations, with Dr. Steven Ellerbe (pictured) over the course of four years and quickly became a favorite in the community. Her housing was provided by Mrs. Hinch, and this inclusive host had Grace going to church Wednesday nights and helping to serve food before the service. She helped with the nursing home bingo at times and even went with Mrs. Hinch’s church group to see the "Diary of Anne Frank" in Houston. In Dr. Ellerbe’s family medicine practice, Grace began developing her interest in treating children. She tried to see as many children as possible there, and by the time she completed her pediatrics rotation in Denison, Texas, she was sure this would be her area of focus. This specialty filled essentially every one of her rotations in her last year.

Grace completed her rural clinical experiences in these Texas communities: Gatesville, Victoria, Crockett, and Liberty. She reports that these were valuable experiences that helped her to explore the variety of small town medicine practices and their unique strengths.

All Rural Scholars are required to complete a Community Health Research Project and the title of Grace’s work was, “An Evaluation of Diabetes Knowledge Among Type 2 Diabetics, High Risk, and Low Risk Diabetic Populations in a Rural Community.”

For residency Grace will specialize in pediatrics at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in Amarillo. So proud of you, Grace!

**Quote from Preceptors**

“Grace was a wonderful student to work with. She is bright, energetic and is willing to go the extra mile.”

– Dr. Ryan Brown

“Ms. Averitt demonstrated a calm and engaged maturity in her interaction with patients. She was comfortable and competent in her history taking and physical exams. She was an excellent student. We would love for her to return to our area to practice when she completes her training.”

– Dr. Hatt
RYAN BEAVER
from Denton, Texas

Ryan is the quintessential philosopher in the class and is always asking questions. He is fascinated by every detail and always wants to know more. He spent a great deal of time in Plainview, Texas availing himself of several outstanding rural adjunct faculty: Dr. James Hall in internal medicine, Dr. David Wright in obstetrics & gynecology, Dr. Bobby Smith in general surgery, Dr. Benjamin Farr in orthopedic surgery, and Dr. Ruth Rector-Wright in pediatrics. He also spent his Year 4 primary care partnership and geriatrics rotations with Dr. John McClanahan. Ryan reports, “I received top-notch medical training in Plainview. I was both lucky and fortunate to have learned under their tutelage. I am thankful for their involvement in my education and development, both professionally and personally.” Ryan also completed his family medicine rural clinical experience in Groesbeck, Texas with Dr. Jeffrey Rettig.

Ryan recollects that one of the highlights of Year 3 was doing OB/GYN with Dr. Wright. “He let me perform the initial sonogram of my second child at only 8 weeks gestation. After teaching me the ins and outs of obstetrics, I eventually went on to deliver my own child in September 2014 back in DFW.”

West Texas Family Medicine (WTFM), the clinic where Ryan did his Year 4 primary care partnership and geriatric rotations is described glowingly as follows,

Quote from Preceptor

“Ryan is an intelligent, mature, and hard-working student. He showed a good attitude toward the rigor of this rotation, seeking out additional patients and providing pre-health students from TCU with guidance and counseling in their career. A solid performance.”

– Dr. Cha

“The clinic at WTFM should be the beacon for what rural primary care can be. They literally do everything including deliver babies, sew lacerations, inject joints, biopsy lesions, cast bones, urgent care, etc, and genuinely love every moment of it. They spend extra time teaching students the art and business of practice management and make every student that comes through their clinic excited about a career in rural primary care. No other rotation is as hands-on as here, and the docs at WTFM are true leaders in rural medical education.”

All Rural Scholars are required to complete a Community Health Research Project, and Ryan’s work was titled “Identifying Primary Factors Responsible for the Decline of Obstetric Care by Rural Texas Family Practice Physicians” and he presented this data at UNTHSC Research Appreciation Day in April 2015.

For residency Ryan will specialize in internal medicine in Vineland, New Jersey at Inspira Health Network and hopes to pursue a career as a rural hospitalist. Bravo, Ryan!
Chelsea went hunting with her family medicine preceptor on her first visit to Comanche, Texas. It was a successful trip, and she returned with a photo journal of her adventures for her fellow ROMEs. This exemplifies the nature of her medical school career; jumping in with both feet and doing everything she can. Almost every rotation for Chelsea provided an opportunity to do as many procedures as possible. Dr. Howard Dickey (pictured) was Chelsea’s family medicine preceptor and her fellow hunting enthusiast for boar, pheasant, and deer. Dr. Dickey’s practice is extremely eclectic and includes tending to patients in the clinic, the ER, and in the hospital. He teaches his rural medical students to do a wide variety of procedures like colonoscopies. Chelsea was always prepared for whatever Dr. Dickey had for her to learn. She reports that her housing was quite a distance, so she always brought extra scrubs and snacks to eat quickly on the run.

Chelsea enjoyed completing rural rotations throughout communities in Texas including Nacogdoches, Mineral Wells, Stephenville, Crockett, Sherman, and Abilene.

All Rural Scholars are required to complete a Community Health Research Project, and Chelsea’s was titled “Reducing Non-Urgent Medicaid Emergency Department Costs in Rural Texas: A Chart Review.”

For residency Chelsea will specialize in family medicine with an emphasis on obstetrics and gynecology. Her love of doing procedures may be how the McAlester Family Medicine Residency Program was able to persuade her to come. “During my visit, I got to do so many different things. I knew this was the best fit for me.” She will be completing her residency at McAlester Regional Health Center in McAlester, Oklahoma. Congratulations, Chelsea!

**Quote from Preceptors**

“Chelsea was significantly above average in the use of her hands – suturing and assisting in surgery. She did her work timely and conscientiously. She will do fine as a physician.”

– Dr. Walker

“Chelsea was professional and caring in her interactions with patients and staff. She is energetic and motivated, seeming to enjoy opportunities for clinical evaluation and treatment. She organizes her presentations well and was respectful. She was an advocate for patient needs.”

– Dr. Roberts
Aaron’s calm and serene demeanor stared directly into the eye of every rotation and he emerged victorious. It can be tough for introverts to excel in our very extroverted world of medicine, but Aaron brought a willingness to learn and his easy smile to each challenge. His interest in alternative medicine and his passion for helping the human body find its healthiest state synchronizes well with what Dr. A.T. Still said, “it is the object of a physician to find health, anyone can find disease.” While Aaron has consumed every aspect of evidenced-based research presented in medical school, his desire to work collaboratively with nontraditional professionals remains strong.

He did well to pepper his clinical rotations with preceptors that would challenge him but also expose him to more eclectic experiences. Aaron enjoyed working with Dr. Anthony Rector (pictured), an integrative medicine physician in the Fort Worth area and recalls that the two would get into great conversations about their work and how to help patients in nontraditional ways. Aaron says, “I learned so much from Dr. Rector about how to consider all that the patient is experiencing, not just the chief complaint but nutrition, stress, and so much more.”

Aaron was one of the first Rural Scholars to travel to Fairbanks, Alaska to complete a frontier medicine rotation with Dr. Benjamin Walz (TCOM). This rotation was very rewarding and fostered Aaron’s love of the outdoors. Other rural experiences took him to distant clinical sites in Plainview, Eastland, Mineral Wells, Crockett, Graham and Denison, Texas. Aaron worked for four consecutive years in Eastland, Texas with his family medicine rural adjunct faculty, Dr. Robert DeLuca (TCOM). Dr. DeLuca indicated that Aaron always spent extra time with patients discussing wellness and gathering written information for them to take home with them to follow.

All Rural Scholars are required to complete a Community Health Research Project, and Aaron completed his project titled “Complementary and Alternative Medicine Usage Among Patients with Neuropsychiatric Symptoms in a Rural Community.”

Aaron will be moving to Corvallis, Oregon where he will join the Family Medicine Residency Program at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center, which includes an Integrative Medicine component. We are so proud of you, Aaron!
William “Will” Griffin from Eldorado, Texas

“I intend to practice family medicine in a rural setting. This has been my goal from the moment I started to pursue a career in medicine,” says Will in a quote from him noted in The Journal of the Texas Osteopathic Medical Association. Will has been courted by just about every rural community in which he completed rotations. One CEO indicated that Will is exactly the kind of physician they are looking for – intelligent, genuine and personable. However, early on Will participated in the Texas Department of Agriculture’s Outstanding Rural Scholar Recognition Program which means he committed to practicing at Lillian M. Hudspeth Memorial Hospital in Sonora, Texas after residency. Will structured his clinical experiences to be a strong resource to this community. He completed his pediatrics and OB/GYN rotations in San Angelo (60 miles from Sonora) so he could establish relationships with their physicians who will later serve as valuable resources. Will completed other rural clinical experiences in Graham and Eastland, Texas.

Will’s family medicine adjunct faculty was Dr. Kevin Cunningham (TCOM) in Eastland, Texas. Will describes this experience as outstanding. He reports, “Dr. C is a great teacher; I learned so much from him and appreciate how much time he took to make sure I had the evidenced based research and how to think like a physician.”

All Rural Scholars are required to complete a Community Health Research Project, and Will’s work was titled, “Screening for Postpartum Depression in Rural Texas Hospitals.”

For residency, Will is returning to his alma mater Texas A&M in Bryan/College Station to complete his Family Medicine Residency. Great job, Will!

Quote from Preceptors

“Will is a good team player and gets along well with staff.”
- Dr. Cunningham

“Will was a pleasure to have on rotation in our practice. He was always on time and ready to work. He was always prepared and able to complete whatever assignment was given. If he didn’t know the answer, he found it. He had a great bedside manner with patients and got along well with all staff.”
- Dr. Simpson
SHAMYAL KHAN
from Carrolton, Texas

Shamyal is the diplomat of this graduating class of Rural Scholars. In addition to the rigors of medical school and the extra 50 hours per semester required by the Rural Scholars Program, Shamyal served as the UNTHSC Medical Student Government Association President. We expect to find him one day serving as the leader of the World Health Organization.

Quote from Preceptors

“Shamyal is going to be a culturally competent, compassionate internist and an asset to his future community. He was the most efficient student I have ever had.”

– Dr. Walz

“Very courteous, respectful individual who seems to place the needs of others above his own. Intelligent, enthusiastic student with a sincere desire to provide exceptional medical care. Wonderful person and student.”

– Dr. Blanton

Dr. Kevin Blanton (TCOM) served as Shamyal’s family medicine adjunct faculty in Clifton, Texas. Shamyal states, “When I visited Clifton for the first time I was overwhelmed with the generosity of my preceptor’s family. Since that time, I’ve spent 6 months in Clifton. Working with Dr. Blanton exposed me to a very broad scope of patient care. His confidence in me inspired me to work diligently and not be afraid to admit that I didn’t know something. The ER nights, OB deliveries, and football games will all stay with me as I start my residency within an hour of Clifton! I will forever be in debt to my mentor.”

Shamyal traveled to Fairbanks, Alaska to do a frontier medicine rotation with Dr. Benjamin Walz (TCOM). Shamyal reports, “It was a wonderful opportunity. Dr. Walz is one of the kindest people I know and impressed me with his intelligence and humility. Alaska itself was absolutely breathtaking. I hunted the northern lights, I got to ride in a dog sled, and I spent time in the hot springs nearby. Surrounded by stars, forest, and snow was incredibly calming. I know for certain I’ll be back to visit again.”

Other rotation sites for Shamyal included Crockett, Fredericksburg, and Sherman.

All Rural Scholars are required to complete a Community Health Research Project. Shamyal presented his project at Research Appreciation Day in 2014 (pictured with Dr. Clifton Cage). Shamyal’s topic was “Comparing Attitudes and Outcomes of the Affordable Care Act’s Readmission Reduction Program in Texas Rural and Urban Hospitals.”

Shamyal will be pursuing a career in Internal Medicine and completing his residency at Texas A&M - Scott & White in Temple, Texas. Outstanding, Shamyal!
One of Celia’s preceptors describes her as “quiet, strong, and hardworking.” This could be the title of the book written about Celia’s medical school career. She walked quietly committed toward each step in the process and never faltered. She will likely be the physician that follows through on every commitment and makes her many accomplishments look easy to those who serve on her team.

Dr. David Hill (pictured) took Celia under his wing as her family medicine adjunct faculty in Cuero, Texas. Celia watched for the first few days on site and learned a great deal about how Dr. Hill establishes and builds trust with his patients. Nearing the end of her family medicine rotation, it was most rewarding to see Celia walk into a patient exam room, confidently introduce herself, gather relevant information, present to Dr. Hill, and determine the best course of treatment. She boldly provided OMM to several patients who ultimately returned asking specifically to see her. She describes her time in Cuero as “an excellent learning experience” and advises incoming students to “be ready for variety and to benefit from the extensive education the staff provides their patients; there was something new every day.”

Celia traveled throughout Texas to continue to gather rich learning experiences in Eastland, Sweetwater, Plainview, Sherman, and Aledo. Also she was one of the bold students who traveled to Fairbanks, Alaska to work with former Rural Track and TCOM graduate, Dr. Benjamin Walz.

All Rural Scholars are required to complete a Community Health Research Project, and Celia completed her project titled “A Description of Availability, Quality and Cost of Healthy Food Alternatives in Rural Texas.”

Celia will be going to the northeast for residency. She will be moving to Springfield, Massachusetts to complete her residency at Baystate/Tufts University. The program is described as a leader in the national medicine-pediatrics community and is recognized by many as one of the top med-peds programs in the country. It also has a reputation for training not only exceptional med-peds physicians, but balanced and compassionate individuals. Celia will make a fantastic addition to this program. Most excellent, Celia!

---

**Celia Maritnez**

*from Corpus Christi, Texas*

---

**Quote from Preceptor**

“Celia is patient and calm but thorough. She demonstrated confidence and maturity and was very dependable and engaged. It was obvious that she came with a good foundation in patient evaluation. Of course, her strong bilingual skills are also a strength. The Spanish-speaking moms loved her.”

— Dr. Hatt
Talon Miner from Cisco, Texas

Early in his tenure at the Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine, Talon participated in the Mr. TCOM competition and was awarded the “Mr. Congeniality” designation at this event. The event helps students balance the demands of medical school with a bit of levity. While this was a playful event, it may well have been a precursor to the strengths that would emerge throughout his medical academic career. Talon is known for his inclusiveness. When one of his preceptors mentioned that he would like to see more students involved in TOMA, Talon went to work to invite a whole host of students to meet with the organization at an event at the school. He was voted by his classmates to serve as their representative in the Medical Student Government Association and has been a strong advocate of the Rural Scholars Program while on rotations by encouraging physicians to serve as adjunct faculty. His ability to draw others in will serve him well as a resident and physician.

Talon relocated his young family to Bonham, Texas so he could complete many of his Year 3 and Year 4 clinical experiences in this area and remain close to his children. He truly immersed himself in the Sherman/Denison community. His OMM rotation with Dr. Jim Froelich in Bonham was described as a rewarding experience that made him want more of this type of training.

In Bells, Texas Talon worked closely with his family medicine adjunct faculty, Dr. Bruce Maniet (pictured). This true Osteopathic advocate provides a fully furnished mobile home next to his office so students can have a place to live while rotating in the area. Dr. Maniet shared his wisdom freely with Talon throughout the four years of their work together.

Talon’s true passion is in surgery, and he traveled to Brownwood, Texas to rotate with a surgeon he had shadowed many years before, Dr. Marlen Strefling. Talon reports, “I truly enjoyed rotating at many smaller hospitals during my general surgery and surgery subspecialty months. Working one-on-one with these knowledgeable physicians allowed me to first assist in 300+ cases and afforded me experience that I don’t think I would have gotten otherwise.”

All Rural Scholars are required to complete a Community Health Research Project, and Talon’s project title was, “The Effects of Television Viewing on Adult Obesity in a Rural Community.”

St. Anthony Hospital in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma will be Talon’s new home where he will complete a traditional rotating internship while he hones his surgical skills even more and continues to bring his unique set of talents to this program. Hooray, Talon!

Quote from Preceptor

“Strong personality with good interactions with staff, parents and patients. He is very comfortable in the clinical setting as a medical professional. He is very kind and caring with his patient interaction. Very much a team player and eager to learn. A pleasure to work with, very timely and responsible.”

– Dr. Truly

Talon from Cisco, Texas
Catherine describes her time as a Rural Scholar with considerable introspection: “My rural rotations have given me so much to think about and learn over the past few years. It seems like every time I tell a cool story about assisting with a tough surgery or working up patients in the ER, I stop myself, thinking ‘nobody is going to believe this.’ These larger-than-life medical challenges have been thrust at me again and again thanks to the gritty and real rural medical education I’ve been lucky enough to have. I consider myself so much stronger at thinking on my feet thanks to these places and people. I saw life and death in rural towns with people who did their utmost to guide and teach me. Some education simply can’t be bought.”

Her family medicine adjunct faculty is the physician Catherine spent the most time with, Dr. Russell Thomas (pictured below). She reports, “he is a formidable man and physician who has a ‘take no prisoners’ approach to both teaching and patient care. Determined to root out my lack of confidence in my skills, he threw me in alone with difficult patient after difficult patient, let me do procedures if I could rattle off all the steps by memory, and made me defend my reasons for everything. He is a legend and I will never ever forget him.”

Her internal medicine adjunct faculty was Dr. Fred Kassis (pictured above) in Sweetwater, Texas. His teaching style is coveted by many, and Catherine was one of his last students before retiring. At one point in her rotation with him, he had to be hospitalized, and she remembers him “teaching from his bed.” She relates, “Dr. Kassis will always be one of my heroes. I’ve never seen a physician so in love with learning and so willing to share that knowledge with students. I owe him so much. It was Dr. K who was my introduction to internal medicine, which ultimately became my favorite thing. I loved my time in Sweetwater more than any other town.”

She traveled throughout Texas learning all she could from these giving rural physicians. She went to Nacogdoches, Sherman, Crockett, and of course, Eagle Lake.

All Rural Scholars are required to complete a Community Health Research Project, and Catherine pursued “Knowledge of Emergency Department Employees Regarding the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act.” During Year 3 she presented a poster at Research Appreciation Day 2014 on bioterrorism resources and awareness in Tarrant County in conjunction with a fellow student doctor.

Catherine will be joining the team at Albany Medical Center in Albany, New York, where she will complete her residency in medicine-pediatrics. We are proud to call you one of our own and will miss you very much!
Krissa is often referred to as a “nontraditional” medical student. This status refers to the fact that she had a successful career, a spouse, and two children before entering medical school. While many would find this an impossible undertaking, Krissa somehow made all of it work and work well. When Year 3 arrived and she was required to do clinical rotations, she moved her family from Fort Worth to north Denton and put several thousand miles on her car as she worked with physicians in Gainesville, Sherman, Decatur, and Bridgeport. She did this while helping her children manage high school and then college. She faced significant hardships throughout this process that no other medical student could have handled. In her first rotation, she was learning alongside her family’s primary care physician, Dr. Gerald Isbell when he suddenly passed away. Krissa was grief stricken and yet helped the practice recruit a physician from Gainesville (Shawn White, MD) to help his fellow physician’s work-family cope with this devastating loss. It may be that Krissa is more than just a “nontraditional” student; she is clearly a master of resilience.

For her family medicine continuity site, Krissa spent four years learning from Dr. Denise Casper (pictured) in Bridgeport, Texas. She states, “I found such value in working with Dr. Casper over the course of the four years. Everyone in her office participated in my learning experience, and I will remember always these very giving health care professionals.”

All Rural Scholars are required to complete a Community Health Research Project, and Krissa’s focus was on “Telemedicine in Rural Texas: Texoma Community Center, Mental Health at a Distance.”

Krissa will complete her family medicine residency at the University of Massachusetts at Fitchburg where she will bring a few lessons in resilience to their graduate medical education program. Great job, Krissa!

---

**Quote from Preceptors**

“Krissa is a very pleasant, hard-working student. Always ready to learn and improve her knowledge. High bedside manner with great patient satisfaction. Highly recommended.”

– Dr. Entiken

“Krissa is an analytical thinker with an inquisitive nature and scientific skepticism. She is a remarkable student and eager learner.”

– Dr. Farahat

“Krissa is a compassionate, honest and easy to work with student. She spoke easily to patients and was eager to learn. She will make an excellent DO.”

– Dr. Rubiero
“Let your light so shine before man that the world knows you are an Osteopath pure and simple and that no prouder title can follow a human name.”

– A.T. Still, Founder of Osteopathic Medicine
ARIEL RIEZENMAN
from Brownsville, Texas

Ariel is a leader. Within her DNA is the natural tendency to nudge a process along until it is at its best. She brought this quality and so much more to the Rural Scholars program. She wrestled every morsel of learning she could out of her medical school experience, and her patients will soon benefit from her rigor. For example, Ariel traveled to Lilongwe, Malawi in southeast Africa to work with Dr. John Podgore and the pediatric population. There she gained extraordinary experience from applying the practice of medicine in a third world country. A note from her journal reflects, “After rounds today, we traveled to one of the orphan feeding centers that the Podgores sponsor. They feed over 500 kids with the requirement that they attend school, have clean clothing, and wash their hands before they eat. Before helping with lunch, we walked to the nearby village and gave quilts and food to some of the grandmothers that take care of many grandchildren either because the parent has died or had abandoned the children. We helped with hand washing (only water - no soap available) and feeding the kids (today they got rice and half an egg). For many, this is the only meal they receive all day.” An unforgettable experience.

Ariel was the first student to take advantage of the new frontier medicine rotation in Fairbanks, Alaska with Dr. Benjamin Walz. She returned with a love of medicine and pediatrics (his specialty).

Quote from Preceptor

“Ariel has a very solid basic medical fund of knowledge for her level of training and actively works to improve her skills. Overall she has all the personal qualities, knowledge and skill to become an outstanding osteopathic physician. Ariel did an outstanding job on this challenging international rural rotation.”

– Dr. Podgore - Malawi

A bit closer to home, Ariel traveled to Seguin, Texas for her family medicine continuity site where she became increasingly autonomous over the four years. “Dr. Sullivan showed me so much and I learned a great deal. In my fourth year I was able to branch out in the community with other physicians and gain from their teaching as well. I am so appreciative of the education Seguin and Dr. Sullivan afforded me.”

She gained considerable clinical experiences in such Texas communities as Plainview, Crockett, Brownsville, and Mineral Wells.

For her Community Health Research Project Ariel’s project title was “An Evaluation of Diabetes Knowledge Among Type 2 Diabetics, High Risk, and Low Risk Diabetic Populations in a Rural Community.”

Residency training will commence for Ariel in the medicine-pediatrics specialty at the University of Tennessee in Memphis. Go forth and conquer, Ariel. We are so very proud of your efforts!
While most students visit their family medicine continuity site on four separate occasions throughout their time in the Rural Scholars Program, Hollie made the decision to immerse herself and her young family into the community of Plainview. They moved there in Year 3 and are now well known in this West Texas town. Hollie has done a remarkable job of learning from just about every physician in this area including the local cardiologist, OB/GYN, pediatrician, hospitalist, surgeons, and of course, the primary care doctors at West Texas Family Medicine Clinic. There is consistent feedback from these medical professionals about how Hollie is a true person of integrity who has a powerful work ethic and outstanding communication skills. Hollie’s family medicine preceptors were Dr. Mark McClanahan and son, Dr. John McClanahan (pictured).

Hollie reports that Plainview provided a very unique and varied learning environment for her. She recalls her recent experience interviewing for residency programs and showed one particular Year 3 family medicine resident her procedure log. He was stunned to find that she has had many more hands-on procedures than even he had. Hollie believes the medical community in Plainview is full of outstanding educators and she is very grateful for their willingness to share their knowledge with her.

Each Rural Scholar is required to complete a Community Health Research Project that may benefit the assigned community. Hollie’s work focused on the “Effect of Eating Meals After 6:00 pm and Snacking Between Meals on Obesity.”

Hollie states that she became completely convinced that OB/GYN was to be her specialty when she assisted in the delivery of a baby girl to a family who had previously not had a successful outcome.

She recollects, “It was truly an amazing experience to be able to share that time with them.” She will therefore be completing an Obstetrics/Gynecology Residency at Texas Tech University in Amarillo.

Hollie was voted “Student Doctor of the Year” by the Texas Rural Health Association this year. Great work, Hollie!

“Hollie’s greatest strength is her people skills. She has excellent rapport with patients and hospital staff. One of the best students at her level I have known.”

– Dr. Hall

“Hollie works well with the team. She is well liked by staff and patients. The nurses always comment how much they like Hollie and I think it is because she is down to earth and approachable. She will be an excellent physician, particularly in primary care. Hard worker, does extra to help with flow.”

– Dr. Wright

Quote from Preceptors
Kimberly Wilson
from Dallas, Texas

Kimberly had several professional lives before coming to the Rural Scholars Program. She began her professional life after obtaining a Bachelor’s Degree in Chemical Engineering followed by a Masters in Bioengineering. She worked in that field for five years and decided to look into academia and research when she finally found her way to us to study medicine. Although she grew up in Dallas, her grandmother lives in Groesbeck, Texas where Kimberly spent summers growing up. She did her family medicine rotations in this town of 4,328 people with Dr. Jeffrey Rettig (pictured), the local osteopathic physician. She recalls how rewarding it was to return to Groesbeck and stay with her grandmother while completing her rural medicine clinical requirements. On one occasion, Kimberly’s grandmother made an appearance on the video conference these remote students participate in each week. She was, of course, a huge hit with the students!

When asked which of her rotations was the most beneficial, Kimberly agonizes over how one preceptor could be more valuable than the others. She completed quite a few rotations in Denison, Texas including pediatrics, surgery and OB/GYN. However, she does say that, “my experiences in Groesbeck have fortified my soul. This is true because of the amazing work environment Dr. Rettig has developed as well as the geriatric experiences I have had in caring for my grandmother.”

Kimberly’s Community Health Research Project topic was, “An Assessment of Body Weight and Health Perception in a Rural Area.” She participated in another research project that was presented at Research Appreciation Day 2013 in her Year 2.

Kimberly will be completing her family medicine residency here in Fort Worth at Plaza Medical Center. We are delighted that she will be close by and are so proud of all she has accomplished. Great job, Kim!

Quote from Preceptor

“Maturity and compassion. I had many patients and parents tell me how much they “liked her” after she completed doing a history and examination. Many of the hospital staff and nurses commented that they hoped she chose to return to our community to practice once she completed training!”

– Dr. Hatt
Our Rural Scholars continuously involve themselves in groups, organizations, clubs, volunteer opportunities, and so much more during their time at TCOM. Their commitment to give back to the community and to share their talents and strengths with others. The following are just a few of the ways they have contributed:

Grace Avorrit served as a volunteer for the Bee Wise Immune, the Hispanic Wellness Fair, Seniors Assisting in Geriatric Education (SAGE), MedStar Community Health program, Como Sharefest, and numerous other activities, including several Medical Mission Trips to Mexico. She was also active in campus professional organizations, including the Christian Medical Association, Latino Medical Student Association, National Rural Health Organization, and the Texas Medical Association. She was active in the Emergency Medicine Interest Group, for which she served as First Year Representative.

Ryan Beaver volunteered for the DO Dash and Mission Arlington Free Medical Clinic through various campus organizations. He also provided sports physicals for two local high schools, volunteered with the Keller School Walk for Diabetes, served as a High School Football Medical Volunteer (Groesbeck, TX), and volunteered in various health fairs. Additionally, he was a board member for the ADA House of Dereham, which focuses on youth development. He was active in campus professional organizations, such as the Foundation for International Medical Relief of Children (FIMRC), Rural Health Organization, and the UNTHSC Soccer Club, for which he served as both player and coach. He was Vice-President of HOSA and was selected as Curriculum Representative for TCOM Class of 2015.

Chelsea Berges was active in campus professional organizations, including the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians-Zeta Chapter, American Osteopathic College of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Rural Health Organization, Student Osteopathic Surgical Association, Texas Rural Health Organization, Texas Organization of Rural & Community Hospitals, and the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. She served in numerous campus leadership roles, including as a Student Delegate for TCOM (Texas Organization of Rural and Community Health) for the Rural Health Advocacy Day in Austin, TX. She also served as TCOM Zachary College Dean’s Cup Committee Chair.

Aaron Erez volunteered for the American Heart Association Heart Walk and Mission Arlington Free Medical Clinic. In addition he volunteered once weekly for the youth wellness program in Eastland, Texas. He was also involved with the indigent clinic at First Baptist Church in Eastland run by the local doctors there. At the beginning of his fourth year, he volunteered twice weekly at Ecology Farms in Edmond, Maryland, focusing on activities related to growing food, nutrition, and healthy living for youth and adults. Aaron was also active with the Integrative Medicine Interest Group and the Preventive Medicine Club.

William “Will” Griffin volunteered for the Cowtown Marathon and DO Dash and was active in campus professional organizations, including the Student Association of American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians-Zeta Chapter (SAACOFP), American Medical Student Association, Rural Health Organization, Texas Osteopathic Medical Association–American Medical Association/Medical Student Section (TMA), and the Texas Osteopathic Medical Association–Student Organization. He also served as SAACOFP-Zeta Chapter First Year Representative (2011-12) and Chapter President (2012-13). On the national level, he served as SAACOFP National Student Executive Board Parliamentarian (2012-13) and as Executive Board President (2013-14).

Shamyl Khan volunteered for the Cowtown Marathon [served on the medical team], DO Dash, and participated in a medical mission trip to Managua, Nicaragua. He also served as the inaugural Master of Ceremonies for the first annual “Mr. TCOM Pageant” raising $700 toward the local Multiple Sclerosis Society. He also served in the UNTHSC Talent Show, raising $2500 for a local homeless shelter and $5000 for childhood cancer treatment. Shamyl was also active in campus professional organizations, including the McKnight-SMART Summer Institute, Rural Health Organization, Texas Medical Association/Medical Student Section, and the Texas Osteopathic Medicine Association/Student Organization. He held numerous significant state and campus leadership roles, he also volunteered as a volunteer for the Good Samaritans of Dallas and their clinic. He served as Treasurer and President for the Medical Student Government Association (MSGA). For his leadership, service, and other achievements, Mr. Khan was inducted into Sigma Sigma Phi Osteopathic Honor and Service Fraternity.

Celia Martinez served as a volunteer for Bee Wise Immune, Hispanic Wellness Fair, Big Brothers, Big Sisters (mentor), Grace Community Club, Vestido Rojo, Grayson County Health Fair, and participated in a medical mission trip to Managua, Nicaragua. Celia was also active in campus professional organizations, including the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians-Zeta Chapter, Pediatrics Club, Rural Health Organization, Medical Student Association (ROHO), Student American Academy of Osteopathy (SAAO), and the Texas Medical Association/Medical Student Section. Through these and other activities, she served in numerous campus leadership roles, including as SAAO Historian, RHA First Year Representative, and Treasurer. Ms. Martinez was also inducted into Sigma Sigma Phi Osteopathic Honor and Service Fraternity.

Krisa Pynch volunteered for the DO Dash and Mission Arlington Free Medical Clinic, and when she served as a volunteer for the American Heart Association Heart Walk and Mission Arlington Free Medical Clinic. She was also active in campus professional organizations, including the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians-Zeta Chapter, Pediatrics Club, Rural Health Organization, Student American Academy of Osteopathy, Student American Academy of Osteopathy, and the Texas Osteopathic Medical Association-Student Organization. During the second year of her medical school, Ms. Pynch was also active in several campus professional organizations, including the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians-Zeta Chapter, Pediatrics Club, Rural Health Organization, Student American Academy of Osteopathy, Student American Academy of Osteopathy, and the Texas Osteopathic Medical Association-Student Organization.

Krisa was also involved in several campus professional organizations, including the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians-Zeta Chapter, Pediatrics Club, Rural Health Organization, Student American Academy of Osteopathy, Student American Academy of Osteopathy, and the Texas Osteopathic Medical Association-Student Organization. During her first and second years of medical school, Ms. Pynch was also active in several campus professional organizations, including the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians-Zeta Chapter, Pediatrics Club, Rural Health Organization, Student American Academy of Osteopathy, Student American Academy of Osteopathy, and the Texas Osteopathic Medical Association-Student Organization. During the second year of her medical school, Ms. Pynch was also active in several campus professional organizations, including the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians-Zeta Chapter, Pediatrics Club, Rural Health Organization, Student American Academy of Osteopathy, Student American Academy of Osteopathy, and the Texas Osteopathic Medical Association-Student Organization.
“Every day across the U.S. rural doctors take care of their communities, one family at a time. Our ROME students are learning this commitment and have distinguished themselves with a high level of performance and professionalism when they go to rural sites.” – Dr. John R. Bowling

OFFICE OF RURAL MEDICAL EDUCATION

John R. Bowling, DO, FACOFP dist.
Professor and Assistant Dean, Rural Medical Education

A. Clifton Cage, DO
Associate Professor

Kimberly Hankins, MSW
Rural Community Assistant Director

Ana Luz Chiapa-Scifres, MS, MPH
Research Assistant Director

Kaily Owens, BS
Executive Assistant

Sarah Taylor, BA
Senior Administrative Associate

Stacy Abraham, MPH
Project Coordinator

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE RURAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM VISIT: www.unthsc.edu/RuralMed or contact us at 817-735-2275.